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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: Missile Defense, G20, Climate, UN, Mideast  
Peace Process, German Elections

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- [1](#)1. Lead Stories

Primetime newscasts and several newspapers opened with stories on the FDP's special party congress in Potsdam, saying that the FDP committed itself to forming a coalition with the CDU/CSU after the elections on September 27 and ruled out a coalition with the SPD. Sueddeutsche headlined: "Obama wants to force peace talks." Most editorials focused on the German elections. A few papers also carried commentaries on the Mideast peace process and the upcoming G20 summit.

- [1](#)2. Missile Defense

President Obama's decision to abandon plans for a missile defense shield in Central Europe was the main foreign policy story in the weekend media, but no longer dominated the German media today.

Josef Joffe said on today's front-page Tagesspiegel that the Poles and Czechs are right to be disappointed "because Obama treats the Russian rival better than his friends. This is no way to run an alliance. If Obama had only gotten something in return from Russia!

However, Putin and Medvedev are not even considering putting tougher pressure on Iran in return. They take a gift that is more valuable than the renunciation of the missile defense shield, which could not have harmed Russia's offensive potential: a unwritten right to veto NATO's strategic decisions."

Welt am Sonntag analyzed that "President Obama's recent decisions are a clear sign for the withdrawal of the West from its global claims," and concludes: "Obama with his shining rhetoric is the

right man at the right time to make the renunciation of western positions and the beginning of a new era look like as if a borderless mutual understanding would overcome the toughest contradictions of interests and values."

Sunday's Frankfurter Allgemeine commented: "It is noteworthy that Israeli Defense Minister Barak made a remarkable U-turn on the same day, saying that he does not believe that Iran threatens Israel's existence. Nudge, nudge, wink, wink-could it be that Jerusalem and Washington are taking first steps towards a containment policy? Could it be that they are about to adjust to an Iran with missiles and bombs, not to say to live with it?"

### 13. G20

While politicians expressed the need to reform the financial system and express optimism that they will succeed in Pittsburgh, media were skeptical about whether the G20 will be able to reach effective agreements.

Focus magazine highlighted that "the fight against future excesses in financial markets is waning. EU leaders shy away from pushing the U.S. to take radical measures at the G20 summit."

Sueddeutsche commented: "Unfortunately, President Obama, who was expected with so much hope, does not seem to be willing to tame the financial markets.... So far the world has heard only words from him and has not seen any action."

FT Deutschland editorialized on its front page: "It has taken a long

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time until Europe has drawn conclusions from the financial crisis. Now, as the European Commission finally comes up with a strategy for a European oversight, Germany is putting up walls and wants to give Brussels as little power as possible. This attitude is dangerous. The EU must take a common approach particularly in the upcoming G20 summit if it wants to push the rest of the world towards a better regulation of financial markets."

Handelsblatt had this recommendation: "Modern financial businesses are a curse and a blessing at the same time. Careless approaches cause serious crises. However, the financial system also offers great gains and prosperity. Those who want to reverse financial globalization by financial checks and taxation must expect a loss of prosperity. However, it is undisputed that financial crises are the other side of the coin of globalization.... We are not putting a stop to all air traffic when a plane crashes. Financial watch dogs should take traffic controllers as a model, call for improved security measures and improve the oversight of the ongoing business."

Die Welt also emphasized that "security has its price," and commented: "If you take the announcements of politicians seriously, the financial world would have to adjust to completely new surroundings after the G20 summit at the end of this week in Pittsburgh. High bonuses and risky financial transactions would belong to the past.... However, despite the demonstrative determination Obama, Merkel and Co are showing, this is not what will happen. The verbal unity of the leaders is deceptive-their interests are too different. This is even true for the topic of bonuses, which would be effective as a powerful message to the public. Anyway, the assumption that restricting bonuses would stop risky deals is naive because the suspected greed of managers was fueled by the expectations of investors and shareholders. This made the incentives possible in the first place."

### 14. Climate Change

Sueddeutsche commented ironically: "The negotiators have done a great job: the recent draft for a new climate agreement contains 7,120 brackets marking unresolved issues, questions, exceptions and exceptions of these exceptions. Three months prior to the essential conference in Copenhagen, it remains unclear, like the outcome of the German elections, whether the world will see a new and better climate agreement... In the long run, reliable climate protection

needs a reliable foundation. The countries must set the first foundation stone this year. Otherwise the project will fail."

Handelsblatt opined: "The most important condition for a successful fight against climate protection is that the negotiations in Copenhagen do not fail. This will depend on U.S. behavior. If it boycotts a post-Kyoto agreement with internationally binding goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it would inevitably result in an erosion of the process. Obama's speech [at the UN] can therefore not be overestimated."

Berliner Zeitung editorialized: "Obama will remain unclear in international negotiations because there will be no U.S. climate law this year. The U.S. Congress could annul any commitment. As a result, the U.S. might again, like in the Bush years, become the greatest obstacle for the UN climate conference in Copenhagen in December."

#### 15. UN General Assembly

In a one-page feature on U.S.-UN relations, FT Deutschland wrote: "Since the change of power in Washington, the White House is moving closer to the UN. U.S. Ambassador to the UN Rice is embodying this changeover. However, the U.S. still continues to negotiate

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explosive topics outside of the UN."

Sunday's Tagesspiegel commented: "President Obama will take a timeout from domestic policies for an entire week. As of Monday, he will spend three days in New York at the United Nations, and on Thursday he will travel on to G20 summit in Pittsburgh. This generous usage of the President's most valuable good-his personal time-illustrates what has changed since George W. Bush. Bush also said no nation is any longer powerful enough to solve international problems on its own, but his solo runs in his first presidency ended only when the failure in Iraq forced him to cooperate. Obama's Ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice, told the press at the White House on Friday the new policy.... Many of her words sounded like slaps into the face of her predecessor John Bolton.... Under Obama, the U.S. government has not turned into a real fan of the UN. Rice also names flaws of the institution, but notes that one could improve them only by cooperation, not a refusal to engage. Symbolically, Obama will be the first President to head a meeting of state leaders on the Security Council-to prevent nuclear weapons from being proliferated."

#### 16. Mideast Peace Process

Under the headline "Handshake without consequences," Sueddeutsche commented: "U.S. Special Envoy Mitchell tried to persuade the Palestinians and Israelis for four days to reach a compromise as if the future of the Mideast region depended on it. He met Netanyahu and Abbas four times and was told a categorical no to the idea of a summit in New York because the differences were too great. Mitchell therefore returned to Washington empty-handedly. However, there suddenly was a miracle and a summit will now take place. President Obama is insisting on it and the unsuccessful envoy Mitchell is trying to sell the surprising summit as a sign of the intensive U.S. engagement in the Mideast peace process. This is only about a photo and a symbolic starting shot. However, a handshake between the Palestinian president and an Israeli prime minister will get the Mideast anywhere.... Peace talks should take place outside of the public eye, not with flashing lights."

#### 17. German Elections

In a whole-page editorial, FT Deutschland is recommending to voters to elect a coalition between the Chancellor Merkel's CDU/CSU and the Greens. "The 2009 election campaign is almost over without having really started. Citizens can cast their votes this Sunday, but it has remained unclear what kind of political alternatives there are... If the FT Deutschland could form a coalition, it would be the CDU/CSU and the Greens: a government under Chancellor Merkel that is driven by the smaller party to implement ecological innovations. At the same time, the larger partner makes sure that

financial policies remain sound.... We vote for Chancellor Merkel, hoping that the 'climate chancellor' will dare something after her embarrassingly soft election campaign."

MURPHY